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SONGS TO A SINGER  
AND OTHER VERSES



SONGS TO  
A SINGER  
AND OTHER VERSES

BY

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## CONTENTS

### SONGS TO A SINGER

	PAGE
THE PRELUDE TO DAY . . . . .	9
WHITE ROSE OR RED? . . . . .	11
THE ROSE OF SONG . . . . .	12
EUPHROSYNE . . . . .	14
STARLESS NIGHTS . . . . .	15
THE GIFT: SONNET . . . . .	16
THE HOPE OF JUNE . . . . .	18
A SONG OF FLOOD TIDE . . . . .	20
ACROSS CHANNEL . . . . .	22
A SONG OF DAWN . . . . .	24
"DOUSHÁ MOYÁ" . . . . .	26
SONNET . . . . .	27
ROSE OF ROSES . . . . .	29
AUBADE . . . . .	30
MIDSUMMER'S STARS . . . . .	31
THE COMING OF WINTER: SONNET . . . . .	32
MY BIRTHDAY . . . . .	34
MYSTICAL SONG . . . . .	36

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	PAGE
OUR SILENCES . . . . .	37
NEW YEAR'S EVE . . . . .	38
THE BITTER MELODY . . . . .	39
SOME NIGHT TO COME . . . . .	40
THE FALLEN STAR . . . . .	42
A KISS AT SUNSET . . . . .	43
FOREST SONG . . . . .	45
SONG . . . . .	47
SONG: RUSSIAN STYLE . . . . .	49
AFTER-THOUGHTS . . . . .	51
LES HEURES TÉNÈBRES . . . . .	52
WHERE LINERS PASS . . . . .	54
THE REST ARE DREAMS . . . . .	56

## VERSES

SAINT ELIZABETH . . . . .	61
REALIST TO IDEALIST . . . . .	64
IN FLOODTIME . . . . .	67
TO A WANDERER . . . . .	70
THE DOUBLE LIFE . . . . .	73
THE SONG UNSUNG . . . . .	75
STORNELLI . . . . .	80
FIVE TATAR FOLK-SONGS . . . . .	82

## FRAGMENTS FROM "KING WALDEMAR"

	PAGE
WALDEMAR'S LOVE-SONG . . . . .	87
WALDEMAR SINGS AT MIDNIGHT . . . . .	88
TOVÉ'S REPLY . . . . .	90
THE LOVE DUET . . . . .	92
THE PRESAGE . . . . .	93
QUEEN HELVIG'S SONG . . . . .	94
THE TIDINGS . . . . .	95
TOVÉ'S DIRGE . . . . .	95
TOVÉ'S BURIAL . . . . .	97
KING WALDEMAR'S LAMENT . . . . .	100
WALDEMAR'S DESPAIR . . . . .	101
KING WALDEMAR'S MIDNIGHT CHASE . . . . .	102
EPILOGUE: THE SUMMER WIND'S WILD CHASE . . . . .	104



## THE PRELUDE TO DAY

THE violins had stirred with hopes that died,  
Like winds too weak to usher in the morn,  
While to the dark-toned basses still replied  
The sad, uncertain echo of the horn.

The impending mass of music seemed to brood  
Inert and torpid, as nocturnal earth  
Waits pulseless in the vague disquietude  
Of that last hour which shrouds the daylight's birth.

Until the blast of trumpets came to break  
And splinter darkness into saffron bars;

*Then flute scales, as from throstles half-awake,  
And harp-chords like the farewell sigh of stars.*

*But last of all the effulgence of your voice  
Rose, scattering all the lingering fears of night,  
And bade my heart grow warm, my soul rejoice ;  
As though God said once more : "Let there be  
light!"*

## WHITE ROSE OR RED ?

My singer, sing a song that flows  
In a silver melody,  
Chaster than the breeze that blows  
From a winter moonlit sea,  
Blanched to perfect purity  
Like the heart of some white rose.

My singer, sing a song that glows  
Fiercer than a smouldering pyre,  
Linked to melody that grows  
Ever stronger, fuller, higher,  
Shot with dusk and scent and fire,  
Like the heart of some red rose.

## THE ROSE OF SONG

*"Strange rose which blossoms free  
On boughs of an enchanted tree  
And sings like any bird"*

A. LANG

SHE stands superb ; a queen apart  
From all the radiant, jewelled throng,  
As when a rose unfolds among  
The gay parterres her glowing heart,  
All lesser flowers, though rare and sweet,  
Must seem but subjects at her feet.

She sings : each lifted face in turn  
Is touched with rapture or with pain.  
O voice, wherein life's triumphs reign !

O voice, wherein life's passions yearn !  
My heart salutes her—queen above  
All queens, my Singing Rose of Love !

## EUPHROSYNE

SET, O star malign,  
That too long has cast  
On this life of mine  
Rays which pierce and blast,  
Star, whose mocking light  
Misleads like blackest night.

Rise another star,  
Shining but to bless,  
Milder, dearer far,  
In its tenderness :  
Star, all stars among,  
Whose course is like a song !

## STARLESS NIGHTS

THE sky is dull and softly clouded  
With vapours all too slight for shape ;  
Her gold and purple closely shrouded,  
Night seems a banner swathed in crape.

The sea lies blank ; I hear it calling  
And straining towards the darkened land ;  
A line of silver, dimly falling,  
Shows where it meets the hidden sand.

Through gloom of starless nights, the ocean  
Still finds a way to reach the shores,  
As through life's stress some veiled emotion  
Has drawn my soul in touch with yours.

## THE GIFT

AH, would that I might spread my arms and  
gather  
The essence of all beauty earth contains :  
The bloom of hills at sundown ; jewelled  
chains  
Of midnight stars ; hues from the peacock's  
feather ;  
The thrill of frost ; the glow of harvest  
weather ;  
The fragrance of pale jasmine after rains  
And golden songs before their passion wanes,  
To blend these in one regal gift together.

But since, dear child, I am not God in Heaven,  
To crush this world, as one might crush a  
flower,

And o'er your life its yielded sweets diffuse,  
I can but give to-day what I have given  
Unasked, eluded, since our meeting hour—  
My great, vain love for which you have no use.

## THE HOPE OF JUNE

BRING, O Maytide, to the earth,  
Festal robes and songs of mirth.  
Clothe the fields in emerald  
Silks, by fairy hands forestalled,  
Woven in April's magic looms.  
Crown the lilac bush with plumes,  
Gild the slopes with fragrant blooms,  
Deck in bridal white the hedges,  
Fringe the brook with flowering sedges.  
Give all nature her desire,  
Birds their mates and maids their lovers.  
I will wait, till summer's fire  
Warms to life yon thorny briar,

Where all day my fancy hovers,  
From grey dawn to golden close,  
O'er one proud, defiant rose.

## A SONG OF FLOOD TIDE

FROM the bosom of mid-ocean  
With a glad and lifting motion  
Flood tide comes in swift commotion.

Like a lover new to blisses,  
First earth's garment hem he kisses,  
Where the wet beach drags and hisses.

Now leaps skyward, now curves under,  
Flings upon her lap the wonder  
Of his shimmering, deep-sea plunder.

Then in wooing waxing bolder,  
Reaches to her sun-warmed shoulder,  
Stretching yearning arms to hold her,

Till cold pools and arid shingle  
In his salt embraces tingle,  
Earth and sea in passion mingle.

## ACROSS CHANNEL

ONE short June night of yearning,  
One bird's clear matin song,  
Twelve hours of golden sunshine—  
A day twelve hours too long ;  
A race through Kentish hop-fields,  
A flashing arc of blue,  
The low, green fields of Flanders—  
And then I come to you !

O stars, desist from roaming,  
Wake birds and call the light ;  
Morn melt in noon and midday  
Mix instantly with night ;

Throb with my haste, hot engines,  
Set seaward, wind and tide—  
My heart outleaps each moment  
That keeps me from your side !

## A SONG OF DAWN

*From A. P. Jacobsen*

AWAKE to joy, O flowers,  
Arise and throw  
The dewdrops from your faces !  
The sun puts forth his powers,  
The stars must go  
To hide in dim sky-spaces.

Already through the grass  
The mottled snake  
Glides to the water's edge.

The rosy dawn-mists pass  
And birds awake  
To sing in hurst and hedge.

Drop from the lily's cup,  
Bright lady-bird,  
And bid your wife come too !  
The summer sun is up,  
The lark is heard,  
The world is born anew !

## “DOUSHÁ MOYÁ”

“DOUSHÁ moyá,” once long ago  
I spoke the Russian words in jest,  
Which pleased thee, though thou didst not  
know  
Their highest meaning and their best,  
Nor dream that thou shouldst come to be  
Doushá moyá, “the soul of me.”

Doushá moyá, if thou shouldst tire  
And care no more to be the breath  
Of impulse, and the active fire  
That keeps my soul from sloth and death,  
How aimless life and work would be,  
Doushá moyá, deprived of thee !

## SONNET

YOUR heart is no enclosèd garden-space  
Where treacherous pools lie hid from sun and  
breeze,  
And stealthy paths, yew-shaded mysteries,  
Lead on lost lovers in a fruitless chase ;  
Nor is it like a close-trimmed public place,  
Where fairest plants and spiciest rosaries  
Are kept for show, and all is trained to please  
A loit'ring crowd with artificial grace.

Ah no ! Your heart is spacious, frank and free,  
As the wild heath-tracts of your northern land,  
Swept clean by mountain winds ; a spot to be

The singing-ground of larks, the enchanted  
strand  
Of happy children—and my dream of ease  
When the world wreaks its petty tyrannies.

## ROSE OF ROSES

ROSE of roses ! All life's garden  
Knows the secret of thy presence,  
Like a sweet, soul-healing essence  
Breathing love and shedding pardon.  
Sweet when noontide's sun has flushed thee,  
Sweeter still when rains have crushed thee.

Rose of life, too bright, too tender,  
For the garden of my spirit,  
Desert land that does not merit  
Perfume rare and crimson splendour !  
Dear in noontide's golden gladness,  
Dearest in the dusk of sadness.

## AUBADE

COME, morn, to melt the shadows

That keep the roses grey.

Stir, thrush, and wake my singer,

Break, primrose dawn, and bring her

Across the glistening meadows

To set the key of day !

## MIDSUMMER'S STARS

ARCTURUS, Vega and Altair,  
Antares, burning fiercely red,  
And all June's stars that overhead  
Are quivering in the limpid air,  
Shine while ye may, for ye shall be  
    Wan and grey,  
    Dissolved away,  
When mine own Star shines forth on me.

## THE COMING OF WINTER

Now woods are black and orchards stripped  
of fruit,  
And half the empty fields are ploughed and  
tilled  
For next year's harvest ; now the dykes are  
filled  
With shining floods of autumn, where the coot  
Dips among yellowing reeds ; the blackbird's  
flute,  
Late tuned to strange tonalities, is stilled ;  
Now robins sing ; and every night the chilled  
Gery world puts on frost's silver-broidered suit.

But winter cannot reach my heart while I  
Fold closely there a dream as dear as true :  
How in the brief November days we two  
Shall meet in flame-lit dusk, and you will sing  
Songs that recall the timid hopes of Spring,  
And all the glad fulfilment of July.

## MY BIRTHDAY

ALL day the fog has brooded,  
The streets are dark and cold,  
My heart is grey with shadows  
That warn me I am old.

I dare not face the firelight,  
For where it smoulders red  
Too many visions gather  
Of men and women dead.

I look through yellow windows  
Upon a yellow square ;  
My gate creaks on its hinges,  
My friend has entered there.

My friend has crossed the threshold,  
I hear her voice that sings,  
And age and fog and sadness  
Are long-forgotten things !

## MYSTICAL SONG

As clouds are drawn along a river's course  
Out to some distant, unconjectured sea,  
So down a silver stream of melody  
My soul to yours is drawn by mystic force.

Serene and stilled, my life floats just above  
The deep, smooth current of your songs that  
flow,  
And is too well content with dreams to know  
Or reckon with the actual joys of love.

## OUR SILENCES

THE world may have your songs,  
Your beauty and your smiles,  
The art that moves great throngs,  
The manner that beguiles.

What use have I for these,  
Who crave a fuller dole :  
Prefulgent silences  
When soul tells all to soul ?

## NEW YEAR'S EVE

IF there be any way in which  
My ineffectual love has failed  
To make your days more full and rich ;  
If in life's stress I have curtailed  
An hour that should have been your due,  
Or blindly left you to uplift  
A load I might have borne for you ;

If once I have misunderstood  
The reason of your smiles or tears,  
Or met in jest your graver mood,  
I can but pray the coming years  
Will make my wisdom more mature,  
That you may learn to find in me  
Love's sight more clear, love's touch more sure.

## THE BITTER MELODY

IF I must name the song in which  
Your voice has touched my spirit most,  
'Twas not that splendid music, rich  
In clarion-cries from Love's glad host,  
When victory and passion meet  
In hearts that never knew defeat.

It was that bitter melody  
Wherein Love's triumph had no part,  
Which like a lone, unanswered sea  
Wailed out its woe, until my heart  
Heard its own voiceless pain that spoke,  
And, realising, sobbed and broke.

## SOME NIGHT TO COME

*(Jean Lahor)*

WITHIN your heart there lies a ray  
Of calm and opalescent light,  
Love, let me put the world away  
And rest there on some quiet night.

Let me forget all anguish past,  
All failures and all life's alarms ;  
There in the silence hold me fast,  
Enfolded in your sheltering arms.

Or take my thought-worn, aching head,  
Some night to come, upon your knee,

And sing to me of lovers dead,  
A poignant old-world melody.

Till in your eyes, with pity wet,  
Perchance at last might be revealed  
Such tenderness and such regret  
That all my sorrows would be healed.

## THE FALLEN STAR

ONE star has left its purple track,  
And from the happy skies  
Has pierced that ocean, blind and black,  
Whence never star nor ship came back,  
Where hope extinguished lies.

O fall not thou, my star, whose spark  
Brought joy beyond all speech,  
Through hidden depths where, white and stark,  
My wrecked hopes drift through gulfs too dark  
For love's own lamp to reach.

## A KISS AT SUNSET

KEEP your kisses, child,  
For younger lips than mine,  
And for hearts less wild  
To whom they are not wine.

Kiss your girlish friends in play,  
They, who think it sweet to-day,  
To-morrow may have met  
Love's kiss—and will forget.

But to me your kiss  
Seems a leaping fire,  
Far too keen for bliss,  
Waking dead desire—

Dreams that never may be told !  
Sweet, it is too late, too cold  
When life's sun is set  
To kiss—and to forget.

## FOREST SONG

THE pinewood seems the path of doom  
The haunt of fear and heaviness,  
Along its avenues of gloom  
The nightwind wails in pain and stress ;  
But ne'er a bird sits carolling  
In glades that yield no joy of spring.

The beechwood is the lover's walk.  
On spreading roots, moss-tapestried,  
Here two may rest to dream or talk,  
Where strange, sea-tinted rays are shed,  
Too tender for the noon's broad light,  
Too warmly green to be of night.

O take my hand, and let us roam  
Together through the hursts of beech,  
Where song thrills all the emerald dome  
And spring has hopeful things to teach !  
Or must our ways divide—and mine  
Lead back through sunless glades of pine ?

## SONG

LOVE, like a honey-scented breeze  
Whose path has been o'er flowers and hives,  
Breathes sweetly on some happy lives,  
For whom his tender mysteries  
    Remain as dreams remote,  
Or pastoral music, sweet and mild,  
Whose limpid echoes give no wild,  
    Discordant note.

Love, like a fierce autumnal gale  
Whose path has been o'er northern seas,  
Brine-bitter with the spray of these,  
Smites on some lives that quail

And shrink beneath the test ;  
And yet the hearts Love's conflicts break  
And those that grieve for passion's sake  
He loves the best.

## SONG

*(Russian Style)*

IN the Heavens one star afar

And above ;

In my heart one star—the star

Of your love.

On the steppes warm showers wake flowers

Red and blue ;

On love's way lie flowers, rare flowers,

Shed by you.

From the woods come songs, from throngs

Of blithe birds,

And my heart sings songs, glad songs,  
To your words.

Where the ocean swirls, lie pearls,  
Fathoms deep ;  
In my soul-depths, shrined like pearls,  
Memories sleep.

Snow and silence white : the night  
Holds its breath ;  
Over life creeps down the white  
Chill of death.

## AFTER-THOUGHTS

My pain is stifled. I have set  
My heel upon Hope's brood, new-born,  
And with much anguish of regret  
Your image from my heart is torn.

Forgive me—we are strangers now—  
But if sometimes the ghost of old  
And murdered love should touch your brow  
With lips that are not yet quite cold,

Bid it depart, lest it should bring  
A flush of shame, a thrill of fear,  
Some warmth from fires still smouldering,  
Or to your eyes one useless tear.

## LES HEURES TÉNÈBRES

I, who would give you my life  
As a shield for your name,  
I, who would give you my brain  
As a spur to your fame ;  
Turn my cold hearth to a warm,  
Safe place for your resting,  
My restless heart to a calm  
Resort for your nesting ;  
I, who would give you my all,  
My soul and body to spend  
On the things you desire—  
What have I done in the end ?  
Laid on your breast like a stone

The weight of my sorrow and care,  
Shadowed your radiance, sweet friend,  
Loved you, and lost you at last  
In a dream-haunted sea of despair.

## WHERE LINERS PASS

THE throbbing liners cut their way down  
Channel,  
Swift rangers 'twixt the old world and the new,  
When steel-bright sunbeams glint on mast and  
funnel  
And noon draws up the earlier mists of blue ;

Or when, with grey fogs palled, their hulls at  
dawning  
Loom out like huge sarcophagi of lead,  
While sirens to and fro wail back a warning  
From treacherous Goodwins to the Serpent's  
Head.

Sometimes, as though the Pleiads strayed from  
heaven,

On passing liners clear and clustered lights—  
Red stars and gold, along the horizon driven—  
Flash by my casement on autumnal nights.

By day or dark, in fair or stormy weather  
Whene'er a liner, outward-bound, steams by  
My lonely spirit, straining at its tether,  
Goes out to hail her in the sea-birds' cry :

“O vessel, to the north-west gale careening,  
Heave to, and bear me with you overseas,  
Till yonder dark horizon intervening,  
Divide me from this world of memories.”

## THE REST ARE DREAMS

IF out of all the lovely things  
That I have meant to do for you,  
The upward flight of lyric wings  
To magic regions, glad and new,  
The flashes of creative fire,  
The noble truths made clear and plain—  
I have fulfilled one least desire  
For which you else had sighed in vain,  
This is achievement's best,  
Life's actual crown—the rest  
Are dreams !

If once in all the years, my friend,  
That I shall only live for you  
And watch you, careless-handed, spend  
Your dearest self on aims untrue,  
And give to others without stint  
The faith no zeal of mine may gain—  
If once you show by look or hint  
My love has saved you one least pain,  
'Twill be achievement's best,  
Life's actual good—the rest  
Were dreams !



## VERSES



## SAINT ELIZABETH

*"I cannot live on dreams alone"*

The Saint's Tragedy

IF I lay low upon my bed  
Wrecked by some hideous, last disease,  
I know that you would take my head  
Upon your breast to give it ease.

Or if the world put me aside  
For some intolerable sin,  
Your stainless heart would open wide  
To fold the culprit safe within.

Or if I sat at Dives' gate,  
A leprous beggar in distress

And you, Princess, came by in state,  
You'd pause to give me alms and bless.

If I should call on you to take  
Some unclean load of shame and pain  
And bear it for a stranger's sake,  
I should not have to call in vain.

But for my daily sin of love  
And wasting hungers of the soul,  
You have the virtue to reprove,  
But not the faith to make me whole.

And for the failing dreams of years,  
And for these human hopes that fall  
Like frost-slain buds, and for my tears,  
You have not any use at all.

But on my life that burns and dies—  
A lamp that wanes with each lone night—  
You look with pure, unpitying eyes :  
God knows, my saint, if you are right !

## REALIST TO IDEALIST

YOU, whose tenderness sets free  
All the virtue locked in me,  
Will you leave this obvious good  
For a useless memory ?

Will you leave a heart that lives  
Better for your sake, and gives  
All its substance as your food  
For a dream deception weaves ?

My life-purpose is your own :  
Mould it to your ends alone.  
All unworthy though it be,  
Bread is better than a stone.

Leave your futile shadow-land  
For life's sunshine ; grasp my hand ;  
Learn love's actuality ;  
Touch my lips—and understand.

Hold the present ; feel the leap  
Of life's pulses ; hear the deep  
Harvest-song of them who sow  
Human joys that they may reap.

Nay, who knows but you are wise,  
Gazing with unfeeling eyes  
O'er my living hopes laid low,  
To the place where memory lies.

Where unchanging, faultless, chill,  
Dream-love can defy me still,

Certain that no living soul  
Shall his vacant office fill . . .

Keep your dead, inviolate past ;  
Hold your pale ideal fast—  
Well I know, who crave the whole,  
Only dreams and memories last !

## IN FLOODTIME

WE parted, and the morning wept  
Wild rain from neutral-tinted skies,  
While down the street the west wind swept  
And mocked aloud my stifled sighs.

I crossed the midlands. Far and wide  
The floods were out on either hand,  
As though the old diluvial tide  
Had rolled once more across the land.

From morn till eve, the slant, white rain  
Fell with a heavy, rhythmic beat

And sang a spiritless refrain  
Unto a world with tears replete.

And listening to its ceaseless fall  
Upon the weary, satiate earth,  
Which did not ask for rain at all,  
But craved a space of sun and mirth,

I knew how wrong my tears, and vain,  
That vexed your life, already full  
Of sadness, as the earth with rain,  
Whose need of joy was pitiful.

Before my journeying was done,  
Above the watery meadows cold,  
Broke one pale ray of evening sun  
And turned those sheets of steel to gold.

At which the earth looked up and smiled  
And half forgot her wretched plight,  
As I have seen a weeping child  
Take comfort at a hint of light.

And so the floods and sunset heard  
My oath to love you cheerfully,  
To win you with a joyous word,  
And smile when you have wounded me.

## TO A WANDERER

WHAT purple splendour seek'st thou in the East,  
What ardent songs, what vintage for life's feast,  
What blooms of potent charm,  
Which were not thine in our own northern land  
Where skies may weep and cold waves vex the  
strand,  
But love is sure and warm ?

Have I not sung thee softer melodies  
Than those that from the parching locust-trees  
To thee the white doves coo ?  
Or doth the nenuphar, when sun is set,  
Smell sweeter than an English rose, rain-wet,  
Or violets steeped in dew ?

When midday winds assail thee, hot and swift,  
Surcharged with flame and sharp with desert-  
drift,

The messengers of fear,  
Know that my vows could win to thee as soon  
As demon-voices on the dread Simoon  
Didst thou but care to hear !

At sunset, when the level desert glows,  
A cold Sphinx flushes like a rock-hewn rose  
Which folds a mystery.

Ah, did Echidna's offspring e'er conceive  
A riddle half so baffling to unweave  
As are thy ways with me ?

Fierce are the fervours of the Dervish crowd,  
At dawn and eve the Moslem cries aloud

His faith from roof and tower ;  
But have not I, fanatic, worshipped thee,  
Contented thy Muézzin still to be  
Throughout life's every hour ?

\* \* \* \* \*

Dream then awhile in ancient, mystic lands,  
Or share the freedom of those trackless sands  
Where careless Bedouins rove ;  
Yet life holds secrets travel cannot teach—  
Come back and wander all thy days, nor reach  
The limits of my love.

## THE DOUBLE LIFE

I TOIL and strive the long day through  
And win no sense of efforts blessed,  
Yet all the while somewhere with you  
My anxious brain's at rest.

I share in life's felicity,  
Such joys and jests as come and go,  
Still conscious that one half of me  
Is darkened by your woe.

And while my spirit walks in night,  
Or mourns with them that mourn,  
My flesh rejoices in the light  
That of your laugh is born.

Sometimes I sit and muse apart,  
The idlest creature under heaven ;  
Yet feel your influence in my heart  
Is working like a leaven.

Or when I sleep, that dreamless sleep,  
Where life and will seem things afar,  
There's something in me wakes to keep  
A vigil where you are.

And I am sure when I must give  
My soul and body up to Death,  
Some faculty of mine will live  
So long as you have breath.

## THE SONG UNSUNG

THE throbbing fires of day were quenched at  
last

In the dim purple of a breathless night.  
The wide, slow Flemish river glided past  
As black as Styx, save where a spear of light  
Punctured its glassy surface here and there,  
Shot from some anchored boat ; in garden  
bowers,  
The listless roses drooped and all the air  
Was warm with perfumes of day-wearied  
flowers.

Long since the sturdy team of roans had drawn  
The day's last load within the Château farm ;

Tall trunks of elm trees, felled and roughly  
sawn

In yon dim woods that crown the pastures  
warm,

Whence comes a low, faint tinkle, as the sheep  
Move spectre-like across the darkening slope.

'Tis late, and yet the village does not sleep,  
But seems astir with some expectant hope.

See, from the Master's villa, set half way  
Between the river and the wooded heights,  
Descends into the starless dusk a ray  
Of gathered glory, like an aureole light,  
And wearied workers in their doorways wait  
A little longer ere they nod and drowse,  
Since rumour flies from cottage gate to gate :  
"To-night there's music at the Master's house!"

Yes, there was music, such as may bring near  
To mortal dulness hints of things divine ;  
Beethoven's loftiest utterance, vital, clear,  
Sprang out of silence at the Master's sign  
Evoked, and through the master-soul did flow,  
Till light and sound seemed focused where he  
stood :

The silver stream that left the silvery bow,  
The flash of lamplight on wine-coloured wood.

The wonder ceased. Within the polished case  
The priceless medium, whereby two great  
hearts.

Had met and communed with us for a space,  
Was laid with reverence, as a woman parts  
With that cold, voiceless clay that was her  
child.

Then with his smile (all know the Master's ways)  
He sped us forth, a band of devotees  
To break the midnight silence with our praise,  
And talk of "tone" and technicalities.

That brief June night I lay upon my bed  
And through the casement's square of filmy blue  
Watched a pale planet set ; my mind was fed  
With music, as the night was fed with dew.  
Master, forgive me ! It was not the strong,  
Deep echo of the boon by you conferred  
That filled my brain, but memories of a song  
A voice beloved had left unsung, unheard.

That night I was not far, friend, from your  
heart,  
Nay, closer than I ever hoped to reach

Across that gulf which keeps our lives apart ;  
Because a cryptic song came back to teach  
A way whereby I took you for my own,  
High in life's fane enthroned and sanctified,  
Against your will, not with it ; all unknown  
To you and to the callous world outside.

It was a song that held a mystery.

(Wolf made it ere the clouds closed o'er his  
brain.)

“The night is still,” it ran, “and thought is  
free  
And none may read my rapture or my pain,  
Since love of soul for soul goes unconfessed,  
And cloaks its bitter, as it hides its sweet ;  
Therefore my love, unspoken and unguessed,  
Is dear as darkness and as night discreet.”

## STORNELLI

FLOWER of the thorn !

My love was so blithe  
When I met her at morn.

Honey-sweet heather !

Her hair touched my cheek  
As we wandered together.

Flower of the ling !

On the fingers I kissed  
There was never a ring.

Pale blossom of privet—  
What are pledges of love  
To the man who would live it ?

Warm flowers of musk !  
My soul was afire  
When we parted at dusk.

Sharp spikes of the gorse !  
Could I leave her the rapture  
And take the remorse.

## FIVE TATAR FOLK-SONGS

### I

FROM out the yellow reeds which fringe the  
burn  
The wild-fowl's cry is borne along to me ;  
Whether I fare straight on, or backward turn,  
Still for my folk I pine eternally.

### II

Ere I could pierce the forest's gloom,  
I broke the rowan-trees apart ;  
Now, severed from my race, with whom  
Can I take counsel in my heart ?

## III

Good it is to stand and see  
How the windmills evenly  
Turn and turn their sails.  
When my love is far from me,  
Vain, sweet words come fluently ;  
Meeting her, my tongue is tied,  
Then the right word fails.

## IV

How am I changed ! Upon the distant hill  
Is stretched a forest dark and vast, O God !  
The happy days that are for others still,  
For me are done and overpast, O God !

## V

Were I a thief, I would steal a horse ;  
I would carry off a maid by force,  
If I were sly and bold.  
But if I were a rosy lass,  
I'd loosen all my heavy mass  
Of tresses black, or gold,  
And in my casement set a light  
For one who passes by at night.

FRAGMENTS FROM  
“KING WALDEMAR”  
A LIBRETTO FOR A DRAMATIC  
SYMPHONY BASED ON THE  
“GURRESANGE” OF A. P. JACOBSEN



## WALDEMAR'S LOVE-SONG

THE saints before the Throne, they know not  
such

Delight as now is mine.

Their harps respond less sweetly to their touch  
Than Wolmer's soul to thine.

Ah, not more fiercely some lost soul desires  
To win back peace and light,  
Than I desired thy kiss when Gurre's spires  
First flashed upon my sight.

I would not change these weather-beaten walls,  
Nor this fair gem they hold,  
For all the splendours of the angelic halls,  
With all their harps of gold.

## WALDEMAR SINGS AT MIDNIGHT

'Tis midnight, when through sable glooms  
The wicked and unblest  
Pass from their long-forgotten tombs  
Wherein they find no rest,  
And, having leave once more to rise,  
Return to gaze, with wistful eyes,  
Through casements where the lamps burn  
bright,  
Or watch the homely ember-light  
That leaps in cottage-rooms.

They shiver in the midnight blast,  
They drift on charnel airs ;  
The mocking wind that whistles past  
A bitter message bears

To them, unsheltered and forlorn,  
The echoing clang of cup and horn,  
The love-refrains of long ago ;  
They sigh, and melt like April snow,  
Poor ghosts whose day is done.

With us is life. My hand lies near

Thy heart that throbs for me.

My head upon thy bosom, dear,

Is rocked as on a sea

Of living billows, warm and white.

Thy hair clings like the perfumed night.

Thy kisses rain on lips and eyes,

And my triumphant passion cries :

“O love, our day is here !”

Time scatters bliss ; love cannot stay !

I too shall go my round

Among that band of spectres grey,  
And come, without a sound,  
To visit thee at midnight's hour,  
Shall closer draw my shroud and cower  
When cock-crow bids me sadly creep  
Forgotten to my grave, to weep  
And ask : "Where is our day ?"

### TOVÉ'S REPLY

AH, Wolmer, canst thou stay to think of death  
Amid our bliss,  
While there remaineth yet both time and  
breath  
For one more kiss ?  
The yellow stars above that pulse and burn  
Must pale at morn,

Yet at each purple gloaming they return

With fire reborn.

Not worse, in truth, is death's mysterious way :

A slumber brief

From nightfall till the dawn's increasing grey

Brings glad relief.

Belovèd, to yon faithful stars look up,

And let us two

Not fear to drain to Death our golden cup,

Who makes love new.

And when his footsteps take us unawares

We will not cry "Alas!"

Nor vex him with our vain and abject prayers,

But kiss and pass.

## THE LOVE DUET

*Waldemar*

My wondrous Tové, having thee  
I have both earth and heaven.  
My spirit floats in crystal calm  
Like his whose sin is shriven.

*Tové*

A white peace rests upon my soul,  
A folded bliss unbroken,  
And passion's words cool on my lips  
And perish there unspoken.

*Waldemar and Tové*

Do not our inmost thoughts rise up  
Like clouds in April weather,

That melt and mingle and assume  
More perfect forms together ?

We gaze into each other's eyes  
And read but one soul's story ;  
One will, one fate, one Hell, or one  
Forgiveness and one glory.

## THE PRESAGE

*The Wood-dove sings*  
WOOD-DOVES of Gurré, my sisters,  
Weary my pinions and slow,  
Bitter the tidings I bear ye,  
Pregnant of woe !

Queen Helvig's falcon, the cruel,  
Swooped upon Tové's white dove,

Pierced to its heart-core and murdered  
The bird of her love !

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUEEN HELVIG'S SONG

SHARPER than the hunter's knife  
When it meets the roe-deer's flesh ;  
Wilder than the panting strife  
Of birds taken in a mesh ;  
Hotter than the lava-flow  
From the riven mountain-side ;  
Bitterer than those stagnant pools  
Left by long-forgotten tides  
Near a lone and oozy sea ;  
Vainer than the tears of fools  
Are the throes of jealousy.

## THE TIDINGS

*The Wood-dove sings*

WOOD-DOVES of Gurré, my sisters,  
Heavy my pinions and slow,  
Bitter the tidings I bring ye,  
Pregnant with woe.

As I flew over the Islands,  
All the winds whispered of dread ;  
Draw near and hear the winds' message :  
*Tové is dead.*

## TOVÉ'S DIRGE

*The Wood-doves in Chorus*

TOVÉ is dead ! Now darkness weighs  
Upon those eyes so bright and mild

That were the light of Wolmer's days.  
Her heart, it is hushed and chill,  
But the King's heart throbs madly still.  
Ah, woe to the heart that is numb, yet wild.

The King, he drifts, a stricken bark  
Whose helmsman in the weeds below  
Lies where no eye may pierce the dark,  
Nor any urgent message go.  
Their thoughts flowed like one river  
Whose course no rocks dissever.  
Where now tend Tové's thoughts? No man  
may show.

## TOVÉ'S BURIAL

*The Wood-dove sings*

I SAW fair Tové's bier upraised

By Hennig and the King

The night was dark, but one torch blazed

To light her burying.

Queen Helvig from her balcony

Beheld her lord depart.

Her vengeful face was dire to see,

More black than Hell her heart.

But when she saw her rival dead,

Borne by in such sad guise,

The tears wrath would not let her shed

Stood glistening in her eyes.

The King a peasant's jerkin wore,

His soul was wrapped in gloom.

He led his battle-steed that bore

Fair Tové to her tomb.

And so the gathering dark increased

As slow they paced along

Unto a chapel, where a priest

Rang as for evensong.

But when he saw the King go by

He guessed his errand well,

And let the tinkling echoes die,

Then tolled the passing knell.

Once Hennig to his Lord hath spoken,

I know not if he heard,

For never was the silence broken  
By any answering word.

But when, in deepest forest hid,  
They reached the burial-place,  
King Wolmer raised the coffin-lid  
And looked on Tové's face.

Long time he looked, and kissed her too,  
As though his living breath  
Upon her lips and eyelids blue  
Might melt the seal of death.

But when his kisses all were shed,  
And she had given none,  
He knew, at last, his love was dead  
And all his hopes undone.

## KING WALDEMAR'S LAMENT

THE mere reflects my Tové's eyes,  
Yon cloud recalls her breast of snow,  
Her voice on forest breezes low  
Comes to me from afar,  
Her smile is in that falling star  
Which gleams and dies.

My thoughts would fashion her again  
From shadows born of wood, or lake,  
My cheated senses strive to make  
A dream reality.  
My Tové, Wolmer yearns for thee  
And yearns in vain !

## WALDEMAR'S DESPAIR

O THOU, stern Judge, who sittest throned  
above  
And mock'st my anguish ; Thou who hast no  
need  
Of human sympathy and natural love,  
When Thou dost raise us from the dead, take  
heed  
That she and I are indivisible ;  
Send not her soul to Heaven and mine to  
Hell,  
Lest from despair I draw such awful powers  
That I shall break the angelic ranks and burst  
The gates of gold ; fling down the jasper  
towers

And with my huntsmen wild leave ruin accurst—  
As comets work hot havoc in the skies—  
Across the shining fields of Paradise.

\* \* \* \* \*

## KING WALDEMAR'S MIDNIGHT CHASE

### THE SPECTRE HUNTSMEN

HAIL, O King ! We come, we flock,  
To thy midnight tryst by mere and rock,  
With eyeless sockets and fleshless hands  
We answer, O liege, to thy commands.  
  
Now fit the shaft to the stringless bow  
And over the hill-tops and moorlands low  
The phantom stag pursue,  
Whose wounds bleed morning dew.

We come, we flock,

To our king in his need.

Harkaway hound, harkaway steed !

Though we gallop apace

Too short is the chase

We must vanish at crow of cock !

\*

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\*

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\*

Stands the cock with lifted beak

Waiting for the first dawn-streak.

From our swords the morning dew

Runs in drops of rust-red hue.

Poor ghosts, our day is o'er,

Earth swallows up once more

All grisly forms that shun the light.

Ere day returns in warmth and might,

Back, back,

Where the grave yawns black !

Ere darkness cease,  
Down, down, to the tomb,  
To the dream-filled gloom  
That brings no peace !

\* \* \* \* \*

### EPILOGUE

#### *The Summer Wind's Wild Chase*

THE summer wind has started on his chase !  
Now yellow tansy, spurge, and loosestrife tall,  
Ere he can reach you in his headlong race,  
Down with your heads, bend quick !  
See how the swarming gnats have one and all  
Forsook the sedgy place  
Where reeds grow thick !  
He falls upon the land like some fierce king  
Bent on maraudering,

Who sails across the northern sea  
And leads his ruthless hosts at will,  
With tattered flags, and fifes, and hautboys  
shril,  
And strange, wild minstrelsy.

The dense marsh mists he scatters like white  
wool ;

He cuts a silver path across the pool,  
And at the fury of his swift advance  
The withered leaves whirl in a Mænad dance.

Wheugh ! How he screeches and whistles  
As loud as an autumn gale !

Now woe to the grey-bearded thistles  
And blossoms whose stems are frail.

He laughs as he mounts and reaches  
The crowns of the shivering beeches.

What swaying and swinging,

What rocking and clinging  
And fluttering of wings in the elm-tree that  
creaks,  
Where the daws and young rooks are alarmed  
at his freaks.

But summer winds know many moods,  
And soon he wearies of the woods.  
Next, through the standing corn he sweeps,  
The barley rustles, and the gold wheat shakes  
And bends, compliant to his will.  
The speckled frog from off the fieldpath leaps  
To some moist covert where he quakes  
And wonders what the wind is doing.  
The dew comes purling down the vale  
In a tinkling rill.  
The August meteors flash and fail,

As though they felt his breath pursuing  
To shatter their fires.

Not yet the wind tires !

Once more he climbs among the trees  
To rifle their green mysteries ;  
As when in May he went a-wooing  
The apple-blooms his rough caresses shed.  
Now all are spoiled and dead.  
Half petulant to find no Maytide flowers  
Among the tree-top bowers ;  
Across an airy space he speeds  
To where the glittering mere  
Reflects the starlight, mild and clear,  
Caught in a mesh of water-weeds.  
The summer wind at last is spent  
And now is glad to rest

Awhile upon the lake's cool breast,  
Beneath night's gold and purple tent.  
Above the waters, still and deep,  
Breathless, with folded wings,  
He rocks and swings,  
Asleep.

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